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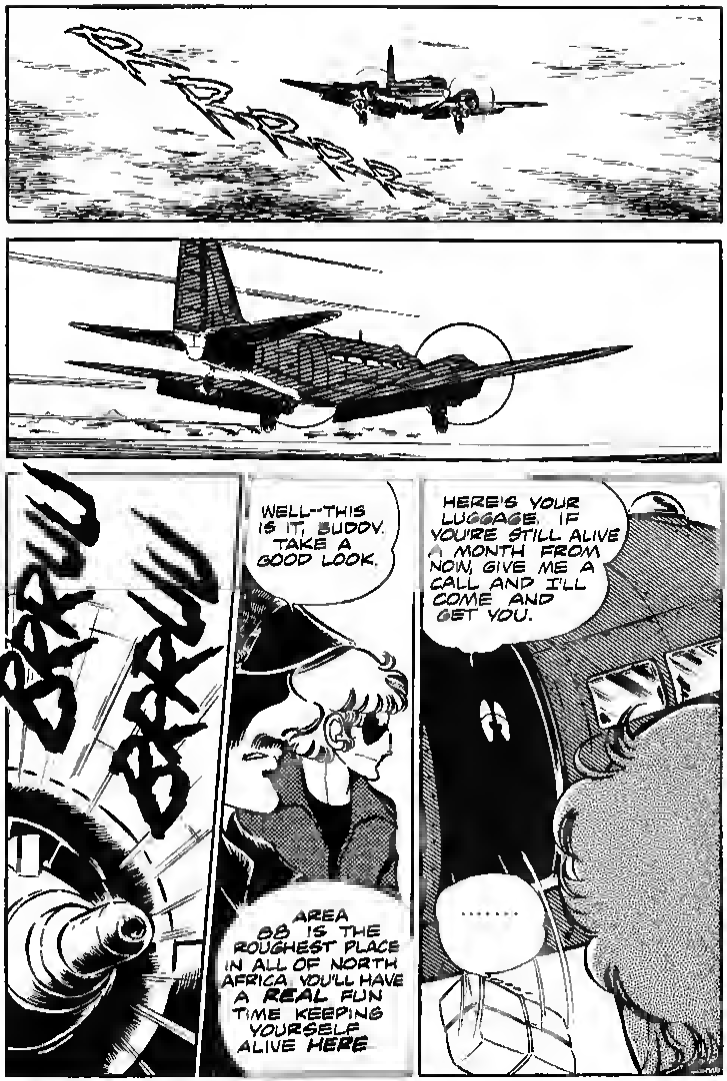
AREA 88

KAORU SHINTANI

BIWEEKLY

Samurai Spirit
In the Red Hot Desert
Struggling to Survive
For Another Battle
The Distant Battle

VIZ COMICS


BRRRR
BRRRR
WELL--THIS IS IT, BUDDY. TAKE A GOOD LOOK.
AREA 88 IS THE ROUGHEST PLACE IN ALL OF NORTH AFRICA. YOU'LL HAVE A REAL FUN TIME KEEPING YOURSELF ALIVE HERE
HERE'S YOUR LUGGAGE. IF YOU'RE STILL ALIVE A MONTH FROM NOW, GIVE ME A CALL AND I'LL COME AND GET YOU.
.....

MISSION 7:

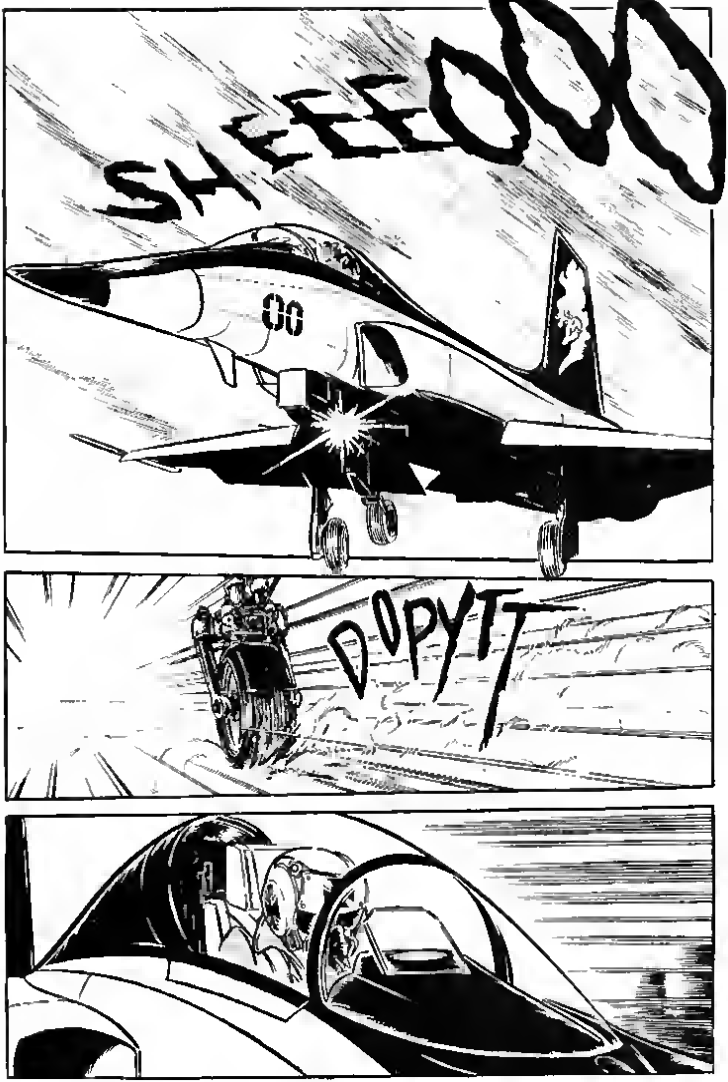
The DISTANT BATTLE

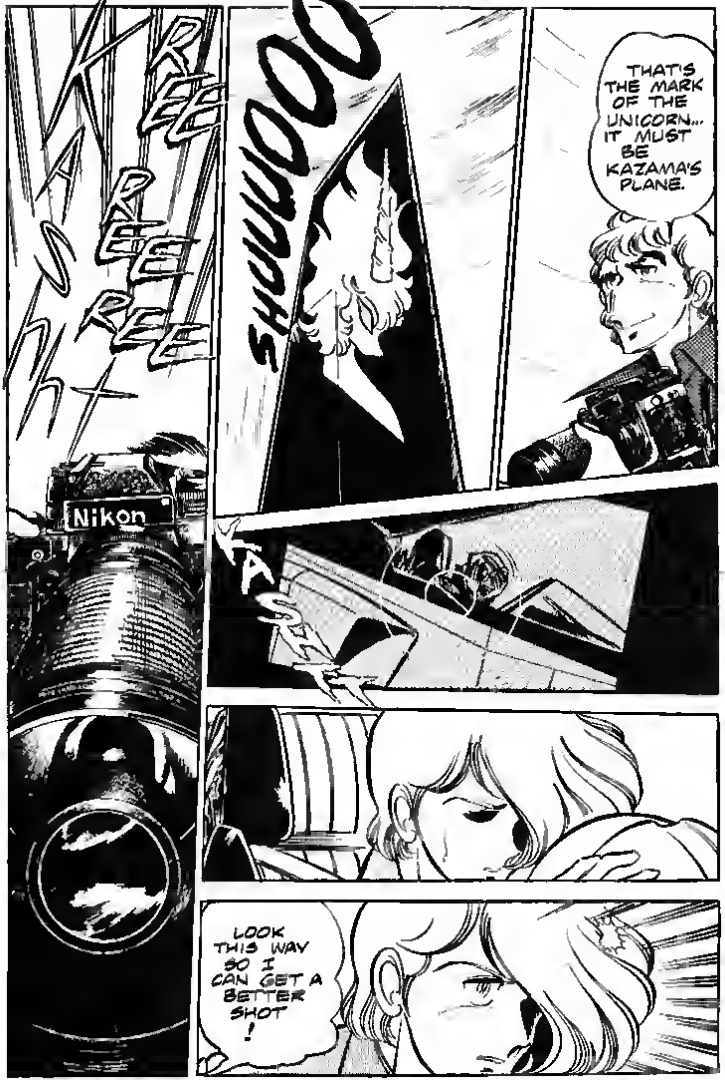
SCANNED BY
HIKARU

I'VE FINALLY ARRIVED HELL IN NORTH AFRICA AREA 88..
KODAK S'AFETY FILM 5C
KO

I AM THE COMMANDER OF THE BASE, SAKI YASHUTARI. I'M A LIEUTENANT COLONEL IN THE ASRAN NATIONAL AIR FORCE.
AND YOU ARE--I SEE-- GOH MUTSUKI, 28 YEAR OLD JAPANESE CORRESPON- DENT FROM THE NP NEWS SERVICE.
CALL ME ROCKY. THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE CALLED ME BACK IN EUROPE.
I GOT TO BE KNOWN AS "FIREBALL ROCKY." I GUESS I'M PRETTY FAMOUS THERE.
I'M SORRY, BUT I DON'T KEEP UP ON WHAT'S HAP- PENING IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD. I'M AFRAID I'VE... NEVER HEARD OF YOU...
HEH-- THIS REALLY IS A PROVINCIAL PLACE...
YES, BUT WHY WOULD THE WORLD FAMOUS NP SEND A REPORTER TO SUCH A... PROVINCIAL PLACE?
I IMAGINE THERE ARE MANY OTHER PLACES YOU COULD FIND NEWS.
YEAH, BUT THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE USING A MERCENARY AIR FORCE.
BESIDES, I HEARD THERE'S A JAPANESE PILOT HERE.

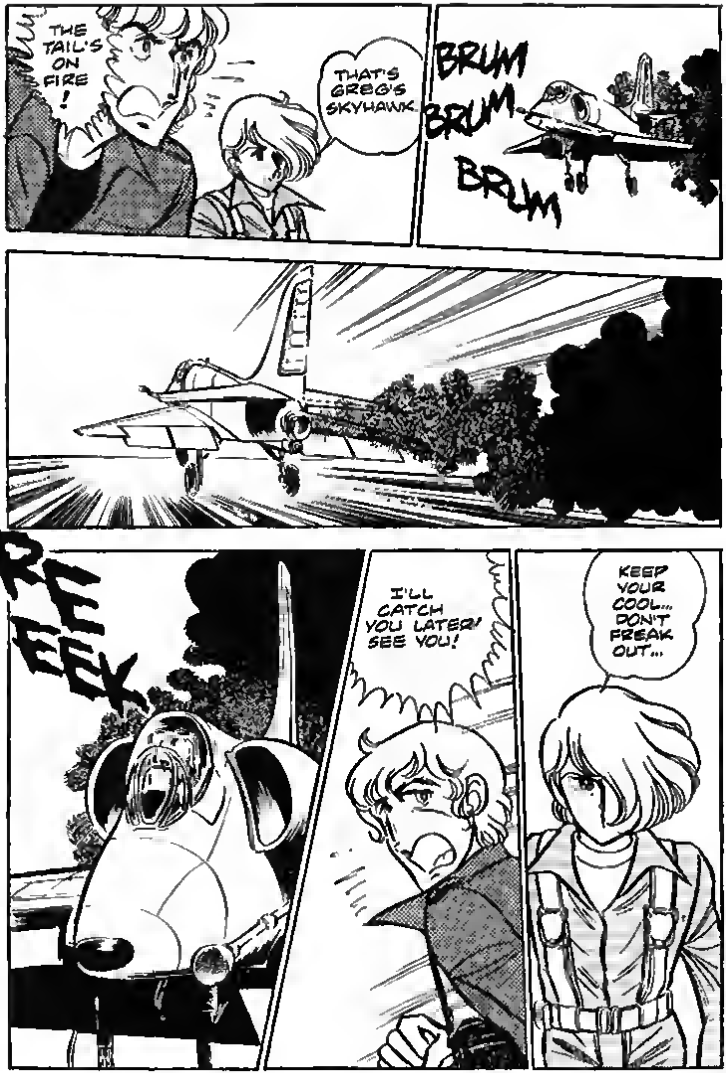
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT KAZAMA?
YEP. IS HE STILL ALIVE?
I DON'T KNOW. HE SHOULD BE BACK SOON.
IF HE'S STILL ALIVE, HE'LL BE PARKING AT SPOT NUMBER 18.
ROCKY, YOU ARE FREE TO COLLECT NEWS HERE, BUT LET ME WARN YOU. THIS IS THE EDGE OF HELL-- I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOU'LL SURVIVE HERE.
PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM SO WE'LL KNOW WHERE TO SEND YOUR BELONGINGS IN CASE SOMETHING HAPPENS.
THE ONLY THING A WAR CORRESPONDENT EVER LEAVES BEHIND IS A BROKEN CAMERA.
IF THIS CAMERA SURVIVES, SO WILL I. BUT I'LL FILL OUT YOUR FORM ANYWAY.
WHENEVER YOU NEED ANYTHING, GO TO MCCOY'S WAREHOUSE AT THE END OF THE AVIATION SHEDS HE HAS ALMOST EVERYTHING.
DOES HE HAVE FILM?
OF COURSE..
HE HAS EVERYTHING FROM TOILET PAPER TO NUCLEAR PAYLOADS.


SHEEOOO
00
DOPYTT


KREE KREE KREE
Nikon
OOOMMMS
THAT'S THE MARK OF THE UNICORN... IT MUST BE KAZAMA'S PLANE.
KA-SHA-SHA-SHA
LOOK THIS WAY SO I CAN GET A BETTER SHOT!

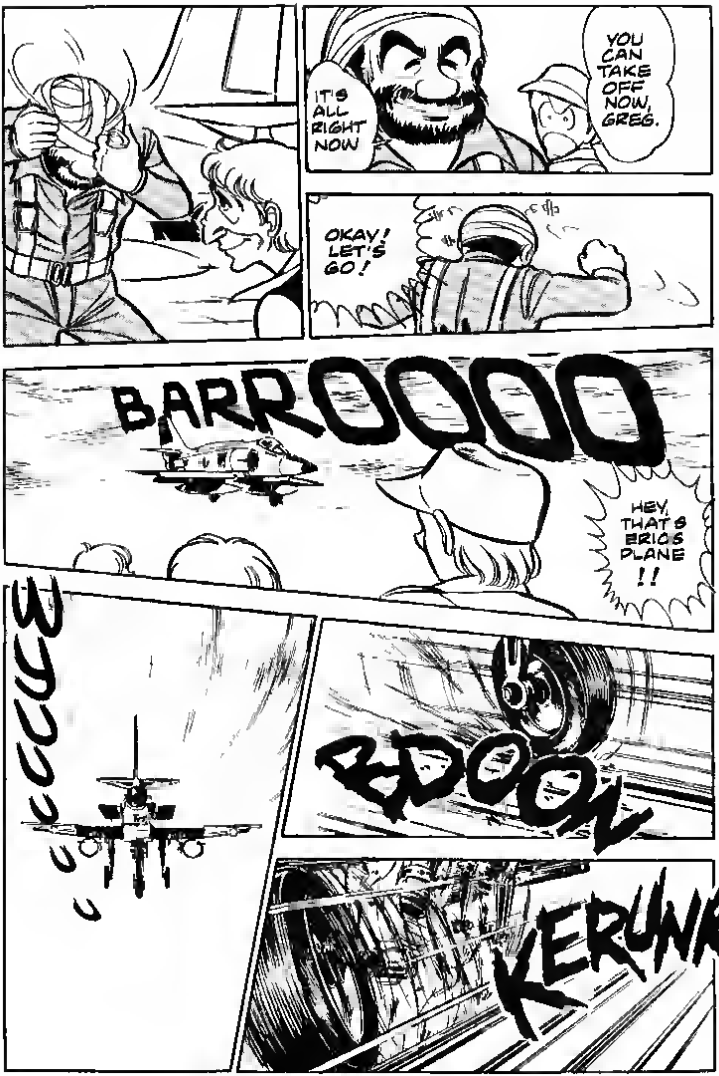
W-WHO ARE YOU ?!
A LONE SAMURAI, FIGHTING FOR TOMORROW IN THE RED HOT DESERT...
YOU HAVE A NICE FACE FOR PHOTOS
THE NAME'S GOH MUTSUKI I'M A CORRE-SPONDENT FOR NP CALL ME ROCKY.
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD JAPANESE IN A WHILE, HAVE YOU ?
.....
THAT'S JAPANESE ...!
THAT'S IT!
GREAT !

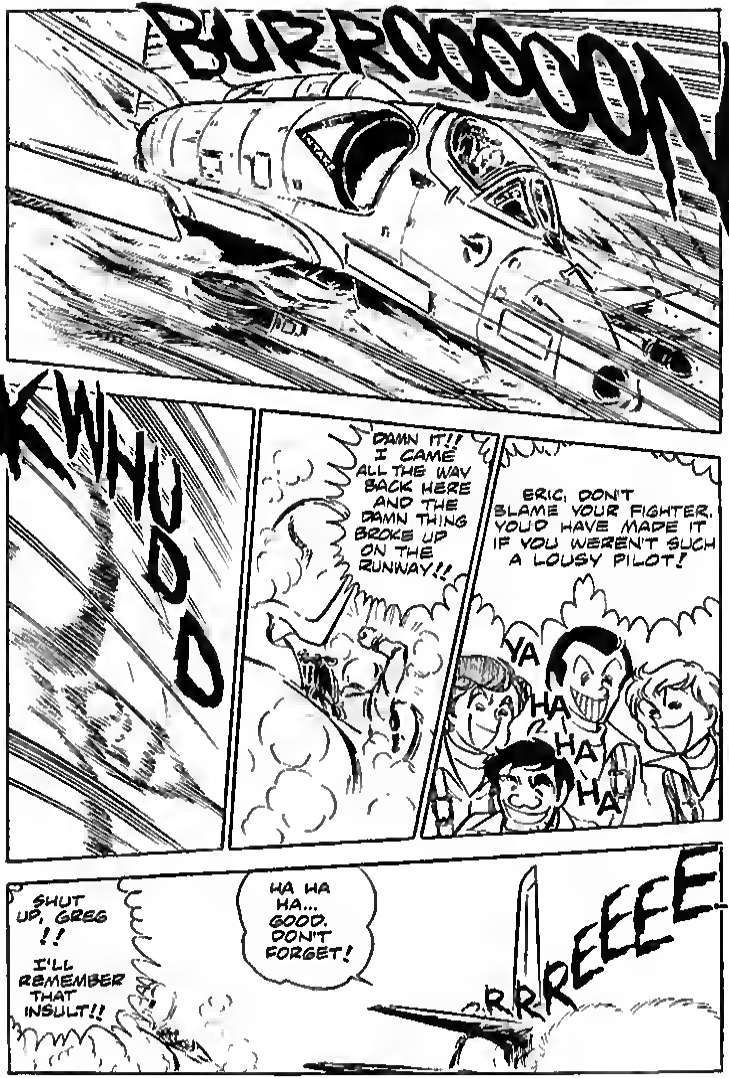
THAT'S AN F5E TIGER II. IS IT EASIER TO PILOT THAN THE OLD F5 FREEDOM FIGHTER ?
THEY'RE PRETTY SIMILAR.
BUT THIS ONE HAS A MORE POWERFUL ENGINE, SO IT CLIMBS AND ACCELERATES A LOT FASTER.
22
KA SHTT
REE REE REE
PLEASE STOP THE PHOTO SESSION. I DON'T LIKE BEING IN FRONT OF A CAMERA.
DON'T BE SO COLD, MAN. I HAVE TO TAKE PICTURES— IT'S MY JOB.
WELL, THERE ARE A LOT OF OTHER THINGS YOU CAN PHOTOGRAPH, RIGHT ?
SHREEE
LOOK! I'LL BET THAT'D MAKE A NICE PICTURE !

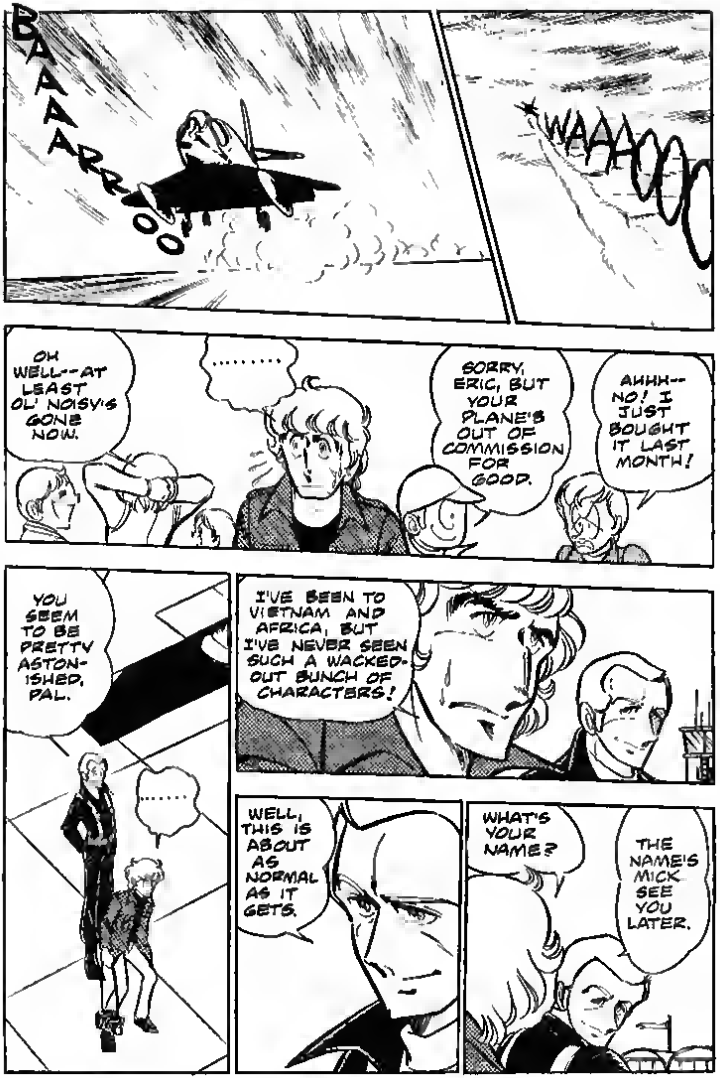

THE TAIL'S ON FIRE!
THAT'S GREG'S SKYHAWK.
BRUM BRUM BRUM
KEEP YOUR COOL... DON'T FREAK OUT...
I'LL CATCH YOU LATER! SEE YOU!
REEK

koff!
koff!
koff!!
HAVE YOU PUT THE FIRE OUT?
ALMOST.
OKAY, FILL 'ER UP. I'M GOING OUT AGAIN!
THERE ARE LOTS OF TANKS OUT THERE. LOAD SHELLS FOR THE MACHINE GUNS, TOO! AND MAKE IT SNAPPY!
TAKE OFF AND THROW AWAY THESE BURNED SECTIONS!
BRING ME SOME DURALUMIN SECTIONS, NUMBERS FIVE AND EIGHT!
W-WHAT?! THEY'VE JUST PUT OUT THE FIRE... DOES THIS GUY WANT TO GO UP AGAIN SO SOON?!

MCCOY!
OVER HERE!
GOT ANY ALCOHOL ON YOU?
SURE THING. MEDICINAL, INDUSTRIAL, OR RECREATIONAL?
MEDICINAL, OF COURSE! I'VE GOT A FEW CUTS.
ONE OF THEIR SHELLS HIT MY WINDSHIELD. A PIECE OF IT'S BEEN JUMPING AROUND INSIDE MY HELMET
WE GOTTA TAKE GOOD CARE OF OURSELVES, YOU KNOW?
HA HA HA
AYE. YOU MAY LIVE LONGER THAT WAY, BOYO.
SHOOSH
SHOOSH
OW! THIS STUFF STINGS! IT WORKS EVEN BETTER THAN MY HAIR TONIC!
HA HA HA
.....


IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW
YOU CAN TAKE OFF NOW, GREG.
OKAY! LET'S GO!
BARROOOO
HEY, THAT'S ERIOS PLANE !!
EEEEE
EDOOM
KERUNK


BURROOOOOM
KWHOOO
DAMN IT!! I CAME ALL THE WAY BACK HERE AND THE DAMN THING BROKE UP ON THE RUNWAY!!
ERIC, DON'T BLAME YOUR FIGHTER. YOU'D HAVE MADE IT IF YOU WEREN'T SUCH A LOUSY PILOT!
YA HA HA HA HA
SHUT UP, GREG!!
I'LL REMEMBER THAT INSULT!!
HA HA HA... GOOD. DON'T FORGET!
RREEEE


BAAAARROOO
WAAAOOO
OH WELL--AT LEAST OL' NOISY'S GONE NOW.
.....
SORRY, ERIC, BUT YOUR PLANE'S OUT OF COMMISSION FOR GOOD.
AHHH--NO! I JUST BOUGHT IT LAST MONTH!
YOU SEEM TO BE PRETTY ASTONISHED, PAL.
.....
I'VE BEEN TO VIETNAM AND AFRICA, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A WACKED-OUT BUNCH OF CHARACTERS!
WELL, THIS IS ABOUT AS NORMAL AS IT GETS.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
THE NAME'S MICK SEE YOU LATER.

S·KAZAMA
PHEW
SHUFFLE SHUFFLE
.....
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD JAPANESE IN A WHILE, HAVE YOU?
YEAH, THAT'S TRUE-- IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME...
SHUFFLE SHUFFLE

.....
GUEST
RAP
RAP
COME IN, IT'S OPEN...
UEST
AH, IT'S YOU. I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COME HERE. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO COME VISIT-- GOOD TIMING.
Nikon
DOES THAT NIKON REMIND YOU OF JAPAN?
WELL-- A LITTLE..

UM--COULD YOU--UH, TELL ME SOMETHING ABOUT JAPAN? ANYTHING, EVEN A LITTLE--
OUR HEADQUARTERS IS IN ENGLAND. I'VE BEEN WORKING IN EUROPE FOR A LONG TIME--WITH LONDON AS MY BASE.
SOMETHING ABOUT JAPAN... SORRY, I CAN'T. I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK THERE IN THREE YEARS.
HUH... IS THAT SO...
IS YOUR FAMILY BACK THERE?
NO.
SOMEWHERE ELSE, THEN?
NO, I'M AN ORPHAN...
I'VE NEVER SEEN MY MOTHER'S FACE.
SORRY, I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED.
THAT'S OKAY... I'M USED TO IT.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?
...
IS IT FUN TO KILL PEOPLE?
I'M NOT DOING THIS BECAUSE I LIKE IT.
WELL, THAT'S AN INTERESTING ANSWER.
I THOUGHT ALL MERCENARIES WERE VOLUNTEERS. BUT YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU DON'T LIKE IT?
YOU WERE HIRED FOR MONEY AND COMBAT. YOU KNEW YOU'D BE RISKING YOUR LIFE
YOU COULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT UNLESS YOU LIKED WAR
THAT'S NOT TRUE!

OKAY THEN EXPLAIN WHY YOU'RE HERE.
WHY DID YOU BECOME A MERCENARY IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT?
BECAUSE...
I'VE BEEN A PHOTOJOURNALIST FOR YEARS.. I CAN READ THE TRUTH IN HIS EYES. HE REALLY DOESN'T LIKE BEING HERE...
HE MUST BE HERE BECAUSE HE WAS FORCED TO...
HEY, McCOY!
WHAT IS IT, BOYO?
I NEED FILM FOR MY CAMERA. DO YOU HAVE ANY?
SURE, LAD. WHAT'LL IT BE?
I WANT 50 ROLLS OF 35MM TRI-X.
AH YES. I JUST HAPPEN TO HAVE SOME IN STOCK.

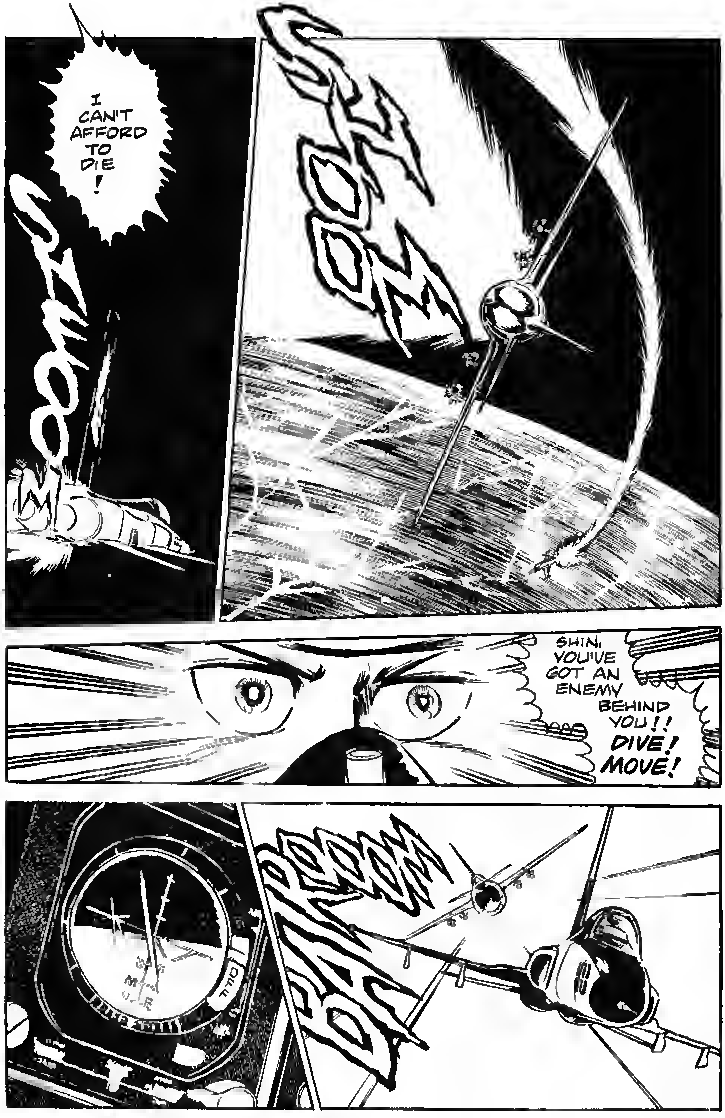
I DIDN'T KNOW REPORTERS WENT ON ASSIGNMENT WITHOUT FILM.
DON'T BE A WISE-GUY..
DANGER
DANGER
WHEN THAT PLANE CRASHED THIS AFTERNOON, I WAS SO ABSORBED IN TAKING PICTURES THAT I LEFT MY FILM BAG OPEN UNDER THE RED-HOT SUN. ALL 200 ROLLS ARE GONE.
WELL, EVERYBODY MAKES MISTAKES DON'T BLAME YOURSELF.
HAVE YOU MET SHIN YET?
YEAH, BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND HIM.
I'VE BEEN AROUND A LOT OF BATTLEFIELDS IN MY DAY...
AND I KNOW WHAT A SOLDIER'S EYES ARE LIKE. SHIN JUST DOESN'T HAVE THEM, EVEN THOUGH HIS COMBAT RECORD IS EXCELLENT.
YOU'RE A REAL REPORTER, INDEED! YOU'VE GOT A JOURNALIST'S INSTINCTS, BUDDY.

MICK, SHIN'S DIFFERENT FROM YOU. HE'S NOT FIGHTING BECAUSE HE LIKES IT
DO YOU KNOW WHY HE'S HERE?
NO. I ONLY HAVE MY INTUITION, NO PROOF
BESIDES, NO ONE HERE TALKS ABOUT HIS PAST.
IT SEEMS THE GOAL OF SHIN'S BATTLES IS ALWAYS SOMEWHERE ELSE. YEAH, SOMEWHERE FAR, FAR AWAY...
FOR HIM, THE BATTLE OVER HERE IS MERELY A STEP TOWARD ANOTHER BATTLE ELSEWHERE...
HE'S DETERMINED TO SURVIVE THIS HELL NO MATTER WHAT...
.....

ANYWAY, HERE'S YOUR 50 ROLLS OF TRI-X.
I'VE KEPT THEM IN THE REFRIG-ERATOR, SO THEY SHOULD BE IN GOOD SHAPE.
AND I'VE STILL GOT 300 MORE ROLLS, SO ASK ME ANYTIME YOU RUN OUT.
THANKS. I OWE YOU ONE. GOOD NIGHT.
BOY, YOU'RE UNUSUALLY NICE TO OUTSIDERS TODAY, AREN'T YOU, McCOY?
WELL, LAST YEAR ANOTHER WAR CAMERAMAN FROM THE NP NEWS SERVICE WAS HERE.
I BOUGHT LOTS OF FILM TO SELL THAT GUY, BUT HE WAS SMART AND HAD EXTRA FILM IN HIS BAG.
I LOST A LOT OF MONEY DUE TO THAT BUGGER. SO THIS TIME, I PUT ROCKY'S PACK IN THE HOTTEST SPOT UNDER THE SUN AND LEFT IT THERE. NOW I CAN FINALLY UNLOAD SOME OF THAT FILM FROM LAST YEAR...
YOU'RE ONE SHREWD DUDE, McCOY.

KAHOOM
BADOOM
SHAAA

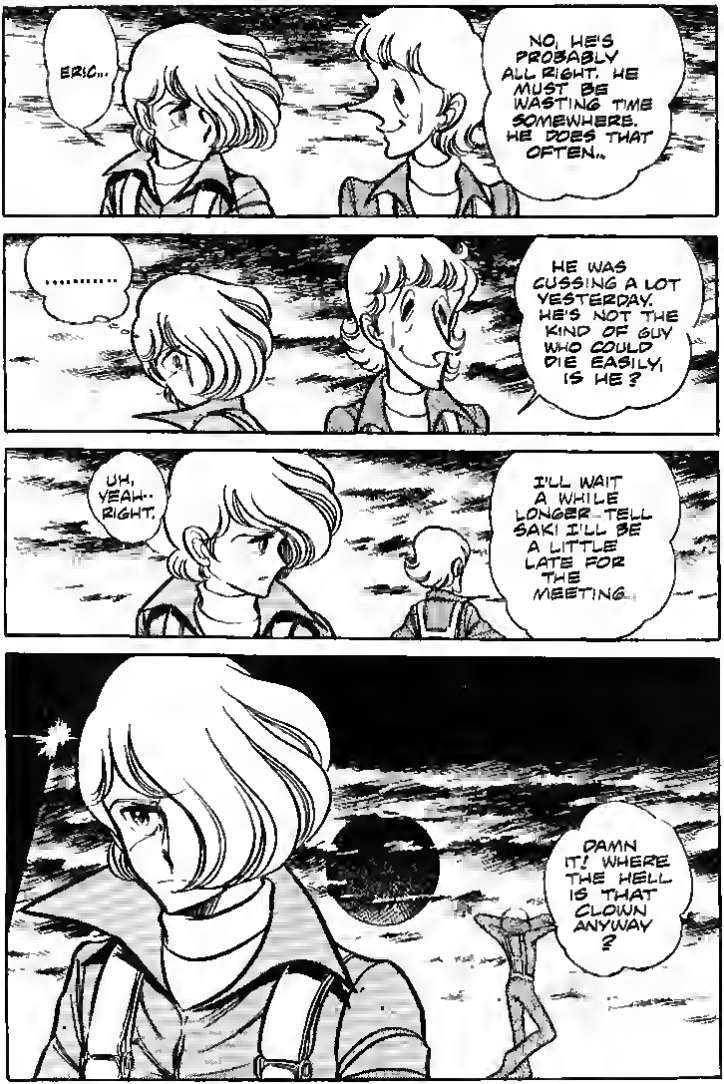
I'M GOING BACK TO JAPAN !
I'M GOING BACK ALIVE ! I'M FIGHTING FOR MY FUTURE !
IS IT FUN TO KILL PEOPLE ?
IS IT ALL RIGHT TO KILL FOR THAT REASON ?
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A PROFESSIONAL KILLER, WORKING FOR MONEY...
YOU'RE A KILLER !
NO !!
NO !
NO ! NO !

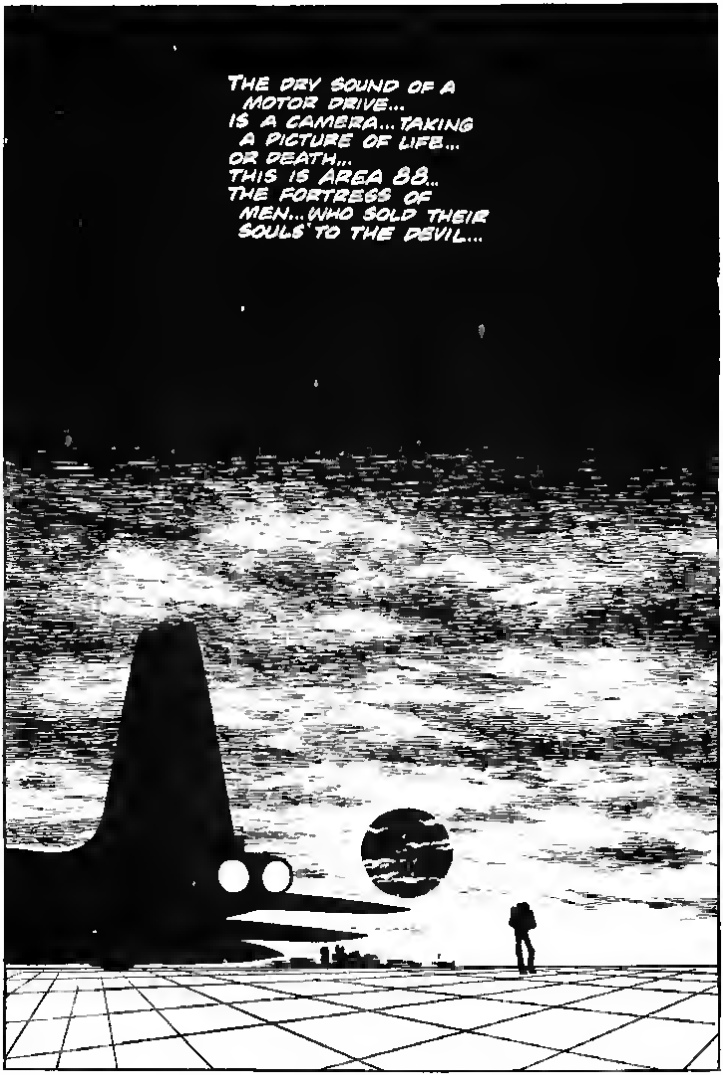

I CAN'T AFFORD TO DIE!
ZOOM
SHOOT
SHIN! YOU'VE GOT AN ENEMY BEHIND YOU!! DIVE! MOVE!
BRRRRR

FAAAAOOO
YOU SAVED MY LIFE, MICK. I OWE YOU ONE.
WHAT WERE YOU DAYDREAMING ABOUT BACK THERE?! YOU ALMOST GOT WASTED!

MICK...
WE'RE NOTHING BUT KILLERS, AREN'T WE?
SHAAOOM
SHIN, IF WE DON'T KILL THEM, THEY'LL KILL US!
SHAAA

HYUUUN
SHEEEUUUN
SHIN !
ERIC.
I WONDER IF HE WAS SHOT DOWN.
THAT BASTARD HASN'T COME BACK YET.
NO...
DID YOU SEE GREG... THE BEARDED GUY?


ERIC..
NO, HE'S PROBABLY ALL RIGHT. HE MUST BE WASTING TIME SOMEWHERE. HE DOES THAT OFTEN..
.....
HE WAS CUSSING A LOT YESTERDAY. HE'S NOT THE KIND OF GUY WHO COULD DIE EASILY, IS HE?
UH, YEAH.. RIGHT.
I'LL WAIT A WHILE LONGER. TELL SAKI I'LL BE A LITTLE LATE FOR THE MEETING.
DAMN IT! WHERE THE HELL IS THAT CLOWN ANYWAY?


THE DRY SOUND OF A MOTOR DRIVE...
IS A CAMERA... TAKING A PICTURE OF LIFE...
OR DEATH...
THIS IS AREA 88...
THE FORTRESS OF MEN... WHO SOLD THEIR SOULS TO THE DEVIL...